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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0672
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RUEHKS/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 0167
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA PRIORITY 2274
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 0155
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 0178
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0402
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SUBJECT: KOMEITO ROLLS OUT ELECTION THEMES IN OSAKA

¶1. At the Osaka Chapter Komeito New Year event, Party President Akihiro Ohta and other Komeito heavyweights made energetic calls to the party faithful to get out the vote in this year's upcoming "critical" elections locally in April and in the Upper House in July. They also clearly framed junior ruling coalition member Komeito's view of the Diet session starting on January ¶25. Turnout at the event was strong with well over two thousand participants. Komeito brought together the party's national leadership, numerous Dietmembers, all of Osaka's local political leaders, the heads of local associations, and small business groups.

¶2. Komeito officials all emphasized pocketbook issues and steered clear of security and international affairs, except for a call for broader Asian diplomacy. Ohta spelled out the "Three K" of Komeito's goals for the Diet session: kempo (Constitutional reform), koyou (labor law revision to improve employment conditions), and kyoiku (further changes to education legislation following revision of the Basic Education Law). Secretary General Kazuo Kitagawa spoke of "three waves"

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the party would have to overcome in what he called the "Employment" Diet: the challenge of shifting more economic opportunity from the big cities to small towns, the need to spur growth in small businesses as well as large corporations, and the need to increase consumption by households, not just firms, which will lead to average citizens feeling the benefits of Japan's economic recovery and lead to "true cyclical growth."

¶3. Ohta called for Komeito to win 13 Upper House seats in July, 5 from the district blocs and 8 proportional seats nationwide, hinting that the LDP shared this goal within the coalition. He said anything less would be a loss for the party. Wave upon wave of candidates took to the stage to ask for the audience's votes. The event was extremely well choreographed to showcase Komeito's strengths in Osaka, its deep bench of attractive candidates seeking office at all levels of government, and its dedicated, energetic Soka Gakkai organizational base from which the party is easily able to blanket local districts on behalf of coalition candidates.

¶4. Komeito's clout and electoral importance was underlined by the active participation of Lower House

senior LDP member and former Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama. Nakayama lavished praise for Komeito's help in turning around the Osaka 9th District election from what he feared would be a DPJ rout into an upset victory for the new Abe Cabinet. He also thanked Komeito for its support in the Diet for elevating the Japan Defense Agency to the Ministry of Defense, and for its assistance revising the Basic Education Law. He said the coalition partners were hard at work deliberating the next steps in constitutional reform, particularly preparations for a National Referendum Law.

15. In a clear, public effort to distinguish Komeito from the LDP, party officials took pains to emphasize they were looking out for the little guy. Ohta added a slight dig against the Prime Minister by saying Abe's slogan of a "Beautiful Japan" is good for nothing more than scenery unless the government answers the hopes and dreams of its people, implying that Abe has yet to do so.

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